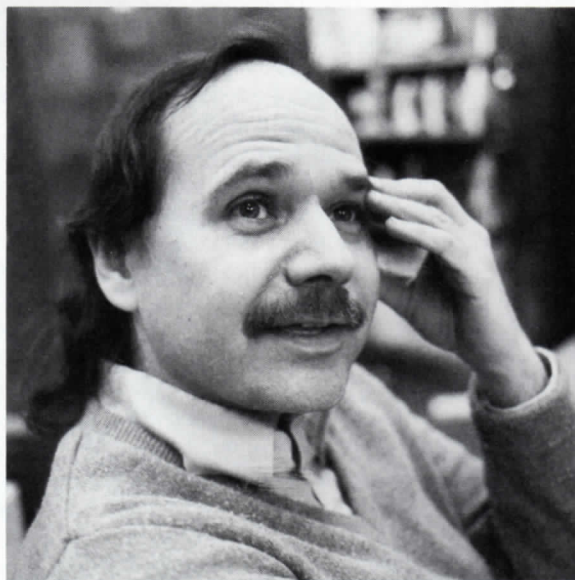


NOTES FROM UNDERGROUND



PHOTOGRAPHY BY JANET CENTURY

Slovenian polkas, Delta blues, lullabies of Broadway, thrash, z-tonalities and acid banjo only begin to describe the music that emanates from the basement studios of that University original, WRUW-91.1FM.

by Stuart Kollar

Does anybody have any idea where the "Witchcraft & Retarded People" cassette is? I haven't seen it in a while and I miss it.

Moments ago, WRUW-91.1FM General Manager Paul Masline admitted you through the northwest door of the Mather Memorial Building and escorted you down stairs to the overheated basement studios.

Just inside the lobby, two unfinished speakers are rumbling with music that needs practice, a recklessly produced genre you'll come to recognize as "college rock." Posters, announcements, schedules, and runic jottings festoon the walls. Mr. Masline explains that if you want to get an idea of what's going on down here, you have to check the Book, a lined journal lying open near the telephone. The Book contains dated messages, epigrams, doodles, captioned cartoons—more than 300 pages of fractured discourse. You examine several entries. They read like this:

When referring to previous notes in the Book, please make sure your references are correct and relevant in order to avoid confusion and/or ridicule.

The extremely annoyed 2HB

And this:

!!X@\$!YZ!! Would the person(s) who plays carts & doesn't let them recue PLEASE knock it off?? This is the nth time I've played a cart that wasn't recued EMV.

"The Book is one of the most important things down here," says Mr. Masline, a senior engineering major. "Everything pertaining to the station is there. It's the best way we have for communicating with everyone."

Moving around the corner to the room dubbed Studio A, he offers you a seat on a chair with exposed springs and explains

that "everyone" includes approximately 100 people, a drop-in staff divided about evenly between CWRU students and community volunteers. "I started with the station three years ago to get a break from my studies," he says. "As a freshman, I didn't do much other than go to class. I realized I had to get involved with something different. Some students practically live down here. I'm usually around four hours a day, seven days a week."

The station broadcasts continuously, offering music and public-affairs programming as varied and original as any you are likely to hear. "College radio stations fit into one of three categories," Mr. Masline explains. "They're either a training ground for professional radio, a vehicle for students to play music for each other and communicate campus events, or a resource run by students but serving the entire community. We're in the last group. Our goal is to let people throughout Greater Cleveland

listen to music they can't hear on any commercial station. Our record collection is one of the largest in the city."

Please look at the color tape before you file—Les Paul/Mary Ford does not belong in jazz. I refiled it where it belongs in general.

Catherine

Moving toward the station's music library, you pass an empty Studio B (used for production and engineering of live shows and "carts"—audio cartridges containing short promotional messages). Next door is narrow Studio C, occupied by a young woman wearing headphones. Through the doorway you catch a glimpse of turntables, compact-disc and tape players, trembling meters. The woman is talking into a microphone.

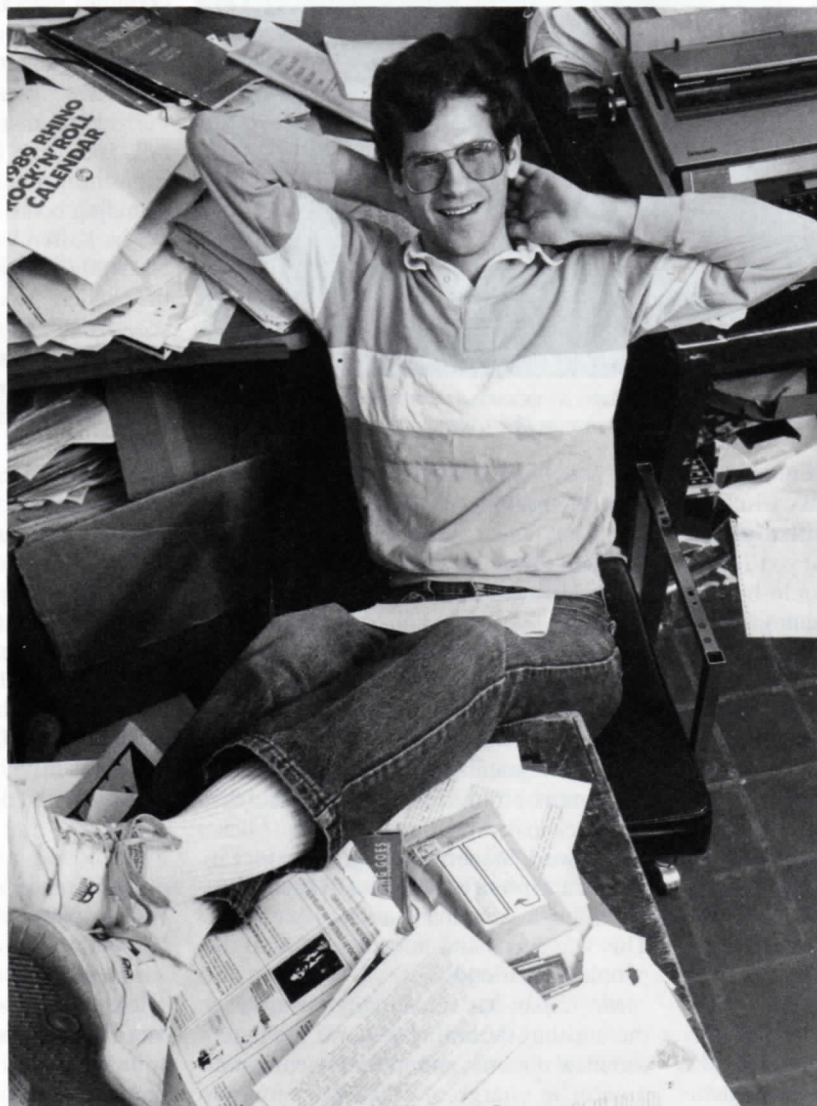
"Keep your voice down," Mr. Masline advises. "She's on the air."

The library is just steps away. Walking through, you're dwarfed by seven-foot-high steel shelves filled with records and CDs. Organized by musical style (different colored tapes on the spine of the jackets indicate rock, country, classical, jazz, blues, international), the collection takes you up and down several aisles and then winds off into a second room. More albums crowd an annex across the hall.

"We've got about sixty-six thousand records and three thousand CDs," says Mr. Masline. He credits this comprehensive and growing collection to Wade Tolleson, the station's music director. "Wade keeps track of what we're playing and circulates lists among the record companies. When they see how much new music we use, they're encouraged to send us more."

Melissa, Bjoern, or Metal Programmers, Please call Rich at Roadracer Records

The word "office" doesn't describe Wade Tolleson's work area. It's more like the aftermath of a small explosion. Flung atop a two-person wooden desk are several inches of posters, catalogs, photographs, trade magazines, news releases and discarded mailing materials. Open file drawers disgorge more of the same.



Up to his ears: WRUW's General Manager Paul Masline catches a breather. On the opposite page, Music Director Wade Tolleson contemplates the latest playlist.

"I take responsibility for the mess," Mr. Tolleson says, entering with a double armful of albums and CDs. A mathematics teacher with twenty-one years' tenure at Chagrin Falls High School, southeast of Cleveland, he rarely gets to campus on weekdays before late afternoon.

Returning to the lobby, he collapses into a chair and listens to the pulsing speakers. "Music director is a misnomer," he says. "I'm really a music acquirer. We don't tell our programmers what to play. The philosophy is to let them discover things, to let

them act as a conduit between the artist and the listener."

Mr. Tolleson says his first responsibility is completing and distributing reports to let record companies see the vast range of music being broadcast on WRUW. To illustrate how he compiles playlists, he unearths a four-foot-wide running tally that shows how often programmers have aired new releases from rock groups like Doctor Bombay, Shakespeare's Sister, and Sustained Agony. "Right now we've got six hundred and ninety-two record companies on our computer," he says. "And that's due to be updated."

Scheduling is going to be very tight this spring. There is a good chance (almost certain) that not everyone who wants a show will get one . . . Suggestion: You will have a better chance of doing a show if you share a show with someone.

PM

WRUW's programming is varied and unpredictable. "We have roughly seventy different shows each semester, with most lasting two to three hours," Paul Masline explains. "Many people aren't aware that our schedule changes so frequently. If you don't like what's on now, try tuning in a little later. We may sound completely different."

Or you could consult the listings of music,

public affairs, and specialty shows contained in the station's free program guide. Musical offerings carom from "international" to "fuzzy" to "z-tonal" to "post bop" to "dark." A late-night programmer describes her format as "hideous."

The person responsible for maintaining this miscellany is Mike Reilly, a senior music major who has been with the station since his freshman year. "I set up the schedule at the beginning of every semester," he says, relaxing for a moment in Studio A. "So I'm more or less responsible



Radio days: David Caban (foreground), public-affairs director and host of Sunday Matinee, sharing the studio with Gary Rozak, Monday-morning polka-spinner

for our aesthetic and technical quality."

In case you're tempted to take a mike in hand and fulfill a lifelong desire to peddle post bop, Mr. Reilly warns that you'll have to earn your air time. All would-be programmers must complete a training semester of seminars, behind-the-scenes chores, and an apprenticeship assisting one of the veterans. Scheduling is completed after qualified programmers submit applications indicating what times they are available and what type of show they want.

Lab Sessions—3 of 'em—are now posted for your production training pleasure. Sign up soon—limit 5 per. More to be added later.

JJR

"When I was a freshman I was sort of shy, and I wanted to stay behind the scenes," says Sue Jaconetta, a senior chemistry major who is the Wednesday-evening host of *Nuclear Ecstasy*. "First I had an afternoon show, but you get a larger audience at night.

"I play generic college rock—garage bands that aren't slickly produced. Sometimes I'll do industrial rock, which is an acquired taste."

Ms. Jaconetta says she abandoned the predictability of commercial radio long ago. "At home in Pittsburgh I used to wind my radio cord over a lamp in order to get the Bethany College station. Every year you see more kids in the freshman class who don't think alternative music is bizarre."

The Telethon has been scheduled. It will be Feb. 26 thru March 4. More info to follow.

David Caban (CIT '89) didn't sever his ties to WRUW when he graduated. He remains this year as public-affairs director and host of *Sunday Matinee*, which spotlights show tunes. Mr. Caban says visiting the station helped him decide to attend CWRU. "When I was evaluating colleges, I knew I wanted to be involved with a radio station. I looked at five or six, and this one stuck in my memory as the best. All the others were modern looking, but strict in format and often closely tied to the university through a communications department. This was loose and informal. I found the people very friendly."

Mr. Caban has filled many positions at the station, including general manager, technical director, and special-events coordinator in charge of WRUW's summer concert and winter fund-raising telethon. Among his duties as public-affairs director are giving seminars to programmers on announcing techniques and, he says, "on how to beg effectively on the air."

If you know some cool songs about trains, leave me a note.

2HB

Station Manager Larry Killen, the University administrator closest to WRUW, lends support from his office in the Baker Building. "We've got a really talented and creative group of individuals down there," says Mr. Killen, CWRU's director of In-

struction and Research Information Services (IRIS). "They bridle at any inkling of censorship."

Responsible for ensuring that the station complies with University policy and with the regulations of the FCC, which renews WRUW's operating license every seven years, Mr. Killen says, "I meet weekly with the general manager. Paul Masline and I talk about the budget and pending programming decisions. He uses me as a sounding board for new ideas."

Mr. Killen explains that the station's \$31,400 operating budget is allocated by the Student Media Board, which is overseen by the student-affairs office. Funds come from the student activity fee and are supplemented by revenues from program guide advertising and on-air fund-raising receipts.

"WRUW has been on the air since 1967," he says. "At first it was a ten-watt station with a range of only a few miles. In 1980 the University increased the power to one thousand watts." The boost in power allows WRUW to reach about an eighteen-mile radius in stereo.

He's a fan who listens to the station at every opportunity. "I especially like Dave Brown's *Wax Museum*, which features old-time rock 'n' roll, Dave Caban's musicals, and *Annie's Blues Show* on Monday nights."

Found—Medallion in lavatory. Describe it and it's yours.

Neal

Like Sunday-night standby "Michigan Mom" (the persona of Phyllis Boehme), country/folk "cuzzins" Dave, Dan and Jimmy Wilson, jazzmen Bill Anderson and Jim Szabo (CIT '77), polka-pusher Greg Holtz, and a dozen others, Annie Weatherhead (LAW '81) rolls on with a steady show that contrasts with the often unorthodox presentations of a changing cast of student programmers. The woman behind *Annie's Blues Show* is an experienced programmer whose engaging air style has won her a strong following. "I got into the station during my first year at law school," she says. "It kept me from going nuts."

Now a Cuyahoga County Domestic Relations Court referee, Ms. Weatherhead fell for the blues upon hearing local harmonica legend Mr. Stress hold forth at the Euclid Tavern just east of campus. She

spends a good part of her Monday evening show taking requests from enthusiastic listeners. "I've been doing this for ten years," she says. "It's probably the longest-running blues show on the air. The phone rings a lot. Some people call every week. One guy tried to pick me up for about a year and a half. He seems to have lost interest."

Weird Caller Alert:

Beware of the caller who asks: "Say, are there any females around?" He may or may not be "the phone tickler" written about in these pages before.
SNL

Want to polka? Just tune in at nine on Monday morning and let graduate student Gary Rozak whisk you out of the weekend in two-four time. His show, *Polka Changed My Life Today*, pays serious attention to music maligned by the younger generation. Currently pursuing his Ph.D. in materials science and engineering, Mr. Rozak attends polka dances, has visited Poland to study the language, and promotes live polka music in Cleveland.

"A lot of people think all polkas sound alike," he says, "so I try to mix old and new, Polish, Bohemian, German, Slovenian. I even like to throw in Irish jigs and Cajun two-steps."

Some of these come from Mr. Rozak's own collection. Broadcasting his show, he makes extensive use of the studio floor, lining the space around him with albums and rolling his chair around to scan selections by Jim Pekol and his Orchestra, the Troubadors, Joe Fedorchak, and dozens more.

"I don't plan this in advance," he says, hastily jotting selections onto his playlist. "If somebody has a request, I'll do it, but I just sort of get a feel for how the music is going."

Many listeners call with requests, forcing Mr. Rozak to remove his headset and work with the receiver propped against his shoulder. "How you doing this morning? You can hear me in Brecksville? What street? Let me get another song up, and I'll talk to you shortly."

Mr. Rozak cues up a cut from *Boys Will Be Boys* by the Boys from Baltimore. He's rummaging through a black briefcase full of LPs when in walks Nick Jablonski, host of a Saturday polka show on another



Lady plays the blues: Ten-year host of Annie's Blues Show on Monday evenings, Annie Weatherhead has attracted a legion of enthusiastic listeners.

Cleveland station.

"If I can go on the air with you, we'll have a little conversation about the Debutante Ball," Mr. Jablonski says. "All the proceeds are going to the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation."

As soon as Mr. Rozak finishes reading the Polka Community Calendar, he lets Nick Jablonski plug the dance. During the next song the phone rings, and Mr. Jablonski takes it. Rozak flips through more albums, decides on a Cajun two-step and cues it up.

"I'm sending this one out to Len Kirchoff and the Cowboy out there in Chardon, Ohio. . . ."

Can someone help me? Someone once told me about a jazz musician named Raasan or Raasan or Rhasan or something like that. How do you spell him really? Do we have any of his albums?

Answer—Rahsaan Roland Kirk

Yes, we have many of his records in jazz. Sebian

What kind of people listen to all this? Just check with any music lover whose favorite style doesn't fall into the commercial mainstream. "WRUW was doing jazz in Cleveland when no one else was," notes John Richmond, executive director of the 600-plus member Northeast Ohio Jazz Society. "The people down there are extremely knowledgeable and aren't easily taken in by the latest fads. The stuff they play has a solid footing. It's often music not likely to be heard on other stations, yet

usually of vital importance."

There's still only one Prince.
Anon.

You're back in the lobby. The studio is alive with people. Paul Masline has moved to a computer in the back room. Alone in Studio B, David Caban listens intently to a program on reel-to-reel tape. Editor of the program guide, Sue Jaconetta is pushing programmers for new descriptions for their shows. A middle-aged man drops into a chair near you, complains of a chest cold, and decides he's not going to update his description. "I've been using the same one for years," he says. "It works okay."

Everybody within earshot seems to agree. You ask what his show is called.

"Straight to the Head," he says. "Reggae."

A glance at a program guide tells you this must be "Prince," a popular programmer of long tenure.

"What kind of music you like?" he asks.

You want to sound hip, and several responses run through your mind. Punk? Industrial? Jazz? Garage bands? "Top-Forty," you hear yourself mutter, and then you tense shamefully.

Prince considers. He examines his fingernails and smiles. "That's cool," he says. "Top-Forty is definitely cool."

Director of CWRU's Publications Office and a frequently published freelance writer, Stuart Kollar is now pondering the merits of Top-Forty.